

AT DEVIL'S RUN.

BY CHARLES B. LEWIS.

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PART I.

On this June morning there is peace in the land.

The Indian agent at Fort Bliss reservation is congratulating himself on the quick and humble demeanor of the subjects of his care, and today his monthly report will announce that the war fever, which seized upon some of the bucks a week or so ago, has entirely vanished. Even "Bald-Faced Charley," a subchief, and the worst of the lot, has settled himself down to be "a good boy."

At 6 o'clock in the morning Sergeant Yates rode out of Fort Bliss with seven troopers to repair the bridge at Devil's Run. Fifteen miles to the west Devil's Run cuts across the military road, as it comes up from the Union Pacific railroad. It is a mountain torrent rushing through the rocky gorge, twenty feet wide, and the spot is wild and lonely.

At 9:30 o'clock, after guard mount, and before the men are ordered out for forenoon drill, Lieut. Day and Miss Phelps came out of the fort for a ride across the country to the west. The officer is one of the three or four unmarried men at the post; Miss Phelps is Major Haldy's niece, here on a three-months' visit from the east. It is a beautiful morning, and the two are enjoying peace that the sick men in the hospital feel the effects of like a tonic.

At 11 o'clock the soldier telegraph operator at the post, who is smoking his pipe and looking out of the window at a troop drill, catches a sharp and sudden call, and five minutes later he has a telegram from the Indian agent, which reads:

"Bald-Faced Charley and fifty fighting bucks jumped the reservation last night and headed for Little Valley."

So, while congratulating himself on the humble attitude of his charges, a war party had slipped off under cover of darkness, and had doubtless found their first victim before he was out of bed. So Sergeant Yates and his seven men had departed for the exact spot where the Indians would seek to cross the military road to fall upon the half-dozen settlers in Little Valley. And, so, riding forth across the plains toward the green-covered foothills, Lieut. Day and Miss Phelps were liable to ride into an ambush within ten miles of the fort. The signs of a war party were everywhere. Ten minutes after that dispatch was received Fort Bliss was in a state of turmoil. Under cover of darkness the war party had made straight for Little Valley, thirty miles from the agency, and about the same distance from the fort. They had six hours before daylight, and meant to fall upon the settlers in the early morning. After midnight a fog came on which reduced progress and finally checked it altogether. It thus happened that daylight found the war party still to the north of the military road, and they did not propose to cross it until night again. The bulk of them were sent in every direction to pick up information. Two of the scouts, from their position on the west of the ridge, saw the riders as they came looting over the plains. A signal brought two more scouts to their assistance. Then the four, mounted on their best horses, made a dash for the military road, entered a dry ravine and waited. Ten minutes after their arrival the riders passed by, headed by the chief, and followed by the rest of the war party. The pair were cut off, and as good as captured. For a mile or more they were drawn down the side of a ridge to breathe their horses, the officer looked back and

"Never mind me," he sternly cried, noted the four Indians following. There were plenty of Redskins riding about every day in the week, but when they saw "subjects" sat their ponies was proof to him that they were renegades and meant mischief. He was armed with a revolver alone. To the right were the foothills—to the left the military road. This road was five miles away. If they could reach it they might run upon the daily mail coach, or some freighters, or, by extending the gallop, reach Devil's Run and the working party.

"You see those Indians, Miss Phelps?" quietly asked the officer, as he pointed to the Redskins advancing at a walk. "They doubtless belong to a war party which has broken loose from the reservation. The military road is off this way. We must ride for it. Get on your horse and stop for nothing. I shall follow close behind you, but never mind me. You are alone when you reach the road turn to the left and can on until you reach the Run." "Do you mean it?" she said, as the color died out of her face and her lip trembled.

"Every word of it, my dear friend. Be brave and ride, as I tell you. Your horses are still fresh, and your road may keep our distance. Ready now. We shall have a good half mile the start."

"But you—"

"Never mind me," he sternly commanded. "I shall follow after, but you must pay no attention. Remember—turn to the left when you strike the road. Give your horse his head and trust him to find his way. Now you are off!"

"What! You?"

"No, no, no, the yell of the Indians as the two riders started off, and then the race began. For the first mile it was an even race. Then the Indians began to gain, and the officer, who did so the officer began to drop back. The girl was riding with a firm seat and her horse was picking his own route. The Indians continued their yelling, but as they crept nearer and nearer the reports of their rifles were added. As a bullet came over her head, Miss Phelps looked back with a white, scared face, but the officer smiled at her and motioned for her to pay no attention. There came a second yell, and then the third and fourth. The lieutenant felt a sudden pain in his right shoulder—a sensation as if a hot iron had struck him. He turned to the left, and then, riding to his left hand and muttered to himself:

"That's a bullet through the shoulder, but they can't do as well again!"

It was wild shooting on the part of the pursuers, but they were counting on luck. Although they had gained a lead in the race the long-legged cavalry horses had the advantage in climbing the ridges and were still in good wind. They were unable to reach the military road, but, barring accident, bullet after bullet went flying after the fugitives, and when the officer was only a mile away the officer suddenly lifted in his saddle again. A bullet had struck him in the left hip. The Indians knew that he was hit again and yelled in triumph. The officer looked back, and the officer closed up the distance and shouted to her through his clinched teeth:

"We are close upon the road now! Be sure and turn to the left!"

Down the slope of a ridge as steep as a house roof thundered the riders into the bushes, and after them came the Redskins. A turn to the left, and then, riding side by side, the officer and the girl used the spurs for the first time and began to draw quickly away. The race was lost to the pursuers, and in their rage they fired their Winchester as fast as they could pull the trigger. Ping! Ping! Ping! came the bullets. One of them struck the lady's hat—another passed through her riding skirt—a third struck the officer in the calf of the right leg.

"Are you hit?" he asked, as he turned to her.

"No—are you?"

"Only grazed, I think. It can't be over two miles to the run, and the Indians will soon give up the chase. Hello—what's that?"

Half an hour previously one of the sergeant's party at Devil's Run had climbed a high hill to examine some growing timber, which might be used for the bridge. Looking away to the east he had seen the officer and the lady as they galloped for their lives, and he had no sooner given the alarm than the sergeant ordered every man to saddle up. It took ten minutes to get started, but they rode fast and were in time. As they met the fugitives they drew aside and let them pass and then fell upon the four Indians and wiped their faces on the face of the earth. The fourth abandoned his horse and escaped up a ravine. When the sergeant rode back to the office of his officer and the lady he found Lieutenant was lying on the ground, and Miss Phelps was near by, crying and wringing her hands and calling for help.

"He is dead—don't you see he is dead?" she wailed in reply.

"Looks like it," shot in the leg, hip and shoulder! Ye gods, but what luck to hang on as he did! No, he isn't dead! Here, Wilkins, get some water, and you, Green, feel the effects of it like a tonic."

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